



## PORT OF BENTON

MAR 22 2000

3100 George Washington Way  
Richland, Washington 99352  
(509) 375-3060  
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February 17, 2000

Senator Slade Gorton  
730 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D. C. 20510-4701

Senator Patty Murray  
111 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington D. C. 20510-4703

Dear Senator Gorton and Senator Murray,

The Port of Benton Commission recognizes that salmon are a national resource and must be protected, but breaching the dams is not the answer. The Commission joins with other Northwest individuals and entities in voicing our unwavering support against breaching of the four dams on the lower Snake River.

As elected officials, it is of our responsibility to ensure that federal officials hear the message of those most affected if this drastic action were to take place. It would be a tale of economic ruin as farmers would be without water to grow their crops, resulting in a domino effect for the rest of the economy; surviving businesses and individuals would shoulder higher power rates; the State of Washington transportation planners, already burdened with transportation budget cuts from the passage of I-695, would be overwhelmed by the 700,000 additional trucks using the states roads and highways, replacing the barges on the Snake River.

The National Marine Fisheries Service, the lead agency with jurisdiction for protecting salmon and steelhead under the Endangered Species Act, indicated there would be little value to fish recovery associated with dam removal.

On November 6, 1999, an opinion/editorial in The Oregonian from Portland, Oregon, wrote "The Bonneville Power Administration, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and the National Marine Fisheries Service suggest that habitat above the dams and the estuary below them are the real killing fields. They argue that habitat, especially the fresh-water streams where salmon and steelhead spend their maiden year, should receive the greatest emphasis in any successful recovery effort."

We believe that the elimination of the multiple benefits provided to the people of the Northwest from the operation of the four lower Snake River dams is too high a price to pay for what appears to be minimal or no benefit to fish. We also believe that declining fish runs must be rebuilt. However, we must do so with a comprehensive understanding of which measures will provide the greatest benefit



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